

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a semiconductor device, the method comprising:
 - providing a Si substrate;
 - forming a SiGe surface layer having an average Ge content less than about 10 at.% on the Si substrate, wherein the SiGe surface layer has an unreacted portion in contact with the Si substrate and a surface portion;
 - depositing a high-k dielectric layer onto the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer;
 - forming an oxide layer between the high-k dielectric layer and the unreacted portion of the SiGe surface layer by oxidizing the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer, the oxide layer being formed during one or both of said depositing and an annealing process after said depositing, wherein oxidizing the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer substantially prevents oxidation of the Si substrate during the depositing of the high-k dielectric layer or the annealing process; and
 - forming an electrode layer on the high-k dielectric layer.
2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the Si substrate is provided with an initial oxide layer prior to forming the SiGe surface layer.
3. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein forming the SiGe surface layer comprises performing thermal chemical vapor deposition, plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition, atomic layer deposition, or sputtering.
4. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein forming the SiGe surface layer comprises exposing the Si substrate to a process gas including a Ge-containing gas.
5. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the Ge-containing gas comprises at least one of GeH₄ or GeCl₄.

6. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 4, further comprising annealing the Si substrate either during said exposing, after said exposing, or both during and after said exposing.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the process gas further comprises a Si-containing gas.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the Si-containing gas comprises at least one of SiH₄, Si₂H₆, or SiH₂Cl₂.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the SiGe surface layer comprises a plurality of SiGe sublayers each with different Ge content.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the SiGe surface layer comprises a graded Ge content.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the SiGe surface layer is less than about 1000 angstroms thick.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the SiGe surface layer is between about 10 angstroms and about 300 angstroms thick.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the high-k dielectric layer comprises at least one of HfO₂, HfSiO_x, ZrO₂, ZrSiO_x, TiO₂, Ta₂O₅, Al₂O₃, or SiN.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the high-k dielectric layer is between about 5 angstroms and about 60 angstroms thick.

17. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the providing comprises introducing ~~[[a]]~~ the Si substrate into a process chamber of one of a single wafer processing system and a process chamber of a batch-type processing system.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising etching the electrode layer and the high-k dielectric layer.

19. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the oxide layer is formed during the annealing process by exposing the SiGe surface layer ~~substrate~~ to an oxygen-containing gas.

20. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a semiconductor device, the method comprising:

providing a Si substrate;

forming a SiGe surface layer having an average Ge content less than about 10 at.% on the Si substrate, wherein the SiGe surface layer has an unreacted portion in contact with the Si substrate and a surface portion;

depositing a high-k dielectric layer onto the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer;

annealing the Si substrate having the SiGe surface layer and high-k dielectric thereon; and

forming an electrode layer on the high-k dielectric layer,

wherein at least one of the depositing and the annealing comprises oxidizing the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer by exposing the SiGe surface layer ~~substrate~~ to an oxygen-containing gas to form an oxide layer between the high-k dielectric layer and the unreacted portion of the SiGe surface layer, wherein oxidizing the surface portion

of the SiGe surface layer substantially prevents oxidation of the Si substrate during the depositing or the annealing.

21. (Withdrawn) A semiconductor device comprising:

- a substrate having a SiGe surface layer with an average Ge content less than about 10 at.% and an unreacted portion;
- a high-k dielectric layer on the SiGe surface layer;
- an oxide layer between the high-k dielectric layer and the unreacted portion of the SiGe surface layer; and
- an electrode layer on the high-k dielectric layer.

Claims 22-25 (Canceled)

26. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a semiconductor device, the method comprising:

- providing a single crystal silicon or polycrystalline silicon substrate;
- forming a SiGe surface layer having an average Ge content less than about 10 at.% on the silicon substrate, wherein the SiGe surface layer has an unreacted portion in contact with the silicon substrate and a surface portion;
- depositing [[a]] an oxygen-containing high-k dielectric layer onto the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer;
- forming an oxide layer between the oxygen-containing high-k dielectric layer and the unreacted portion of the SiGe surface layer by oxidizing the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer by diffusing oxygen from the oxygen-containing high-k dielectric layer into the surface portion and/or by exposing the surface portion to an oxidizing gas under oxidizing conditions, the oxide layer being formed during one or both of said depositing and an annealing process after said depositing, and wherein oxidizing the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer substantially prevents oxidation of the silicon substrate during the depositing and/or the annealing process; and
- forming an electrode layer on the high-k dielectric layer.

27. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein oxidizing the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer includes exposing the surface portion to the oxidizing gas under oxidizing conditions.

28. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein oxidizing the surface portion of the SiGe surface layer includes diffusing oxygen from the oxygen-containing high-k dielectric layer into the surface portion.